(b) if so, whether the Government are considering to convert above steam loco shed into the electric loco shed or workshop;

(c) if so, the time by which final decision in this regard is likely to be taken; and

(d) if not, the reasons for not utilising the present infrastructure of above steam loco shed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No Sir. Railway workshop/ Electric Loco Sheds are set up keeping in view the Railways' requirement of rolling stock and their maintenance in specific region. The existing facilities in the region are considered adequate to meet the Railways' requirement and as such there is no plan to convert steam loco shed at Bitragunta into a workshop/ electric loco shed.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) Space available in the loco shed is being utilised for other operational activities.

Construction of Balurghat-Eklakhi Railway Line

2939. SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have fixed any target date for completion of construction of Balurghat-Eklakhi railway line;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Completion of the project would depend upon the availability of resources. In view of the throwforward of about Rs. 12000 crs. for new line projects and the need to accord priority to projects required on urgent strategic/operational considerations and those projects nearing completion, it is not possible to determine the funds which can be allocated to this project over the coming years, in view of the very limited allotment of funds for new lines by the Planning Commission each year.

Expenditure Incurred on Advertisements

2940. LT. GENERAL SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the amount spent on advertisements during 1996-97 in newspapers for informing the public about opening ceremonies with regard to newly opened zones or like functions;

(b) whether it has lead to an increase in freight traffic and profit to the Railways; and

(c) if so, the details, thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) An amount of Rs. 3,68,37,676/- approx. has been spent by Railways on advertisements during 1996-97 for publicity of opening ceremonies through the newspapers.

(b) and (c) Publicity through the print media on inaugural functions/opening ceremonies, etc. serves the purpose of informing the public about the new facilities for realising the goal of optimum use of the facilities/ opportunities so that the benefits to the users and consequently to the Railways is accrued. The quantification of the advantages is, however, not possible.

Train Drivers on Strike

2941. KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Train Drivers of Samastipur Division of North Eastern Railway had gone on an indefinite strike recently due to which train services were paralysed;

(b) if so, the reasons for the said strike;

(c) the amount of loss suffered by the Railways due to said strike; and

(d) the efforts made by the Government to end the strike?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) No, Sir.

However, due to resentment of some Drivers of Samastipur Division over the issue of new crew link, some inconvenience took place in running the trains. The matter was, however, sorted out immediately and normal running of trains restored.

Establishment of Coaching Complex

2942. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have proposal to establish a coaching complex in the Southern Railway; and

(b) if so, whether the long standing demand of the people of Nagarcoil in this regard is likely to be considered by establishing the same there?